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Family community aides were used in disadvantaged East Saint Louis, Illinois, schools in an effort to bridge the communication gap between the school and the home. The indigenous nonprofessional aides received 16 weeks of training to perform auxiliary noninstructional service and to act as liaison personnel between school and community. These aides also made home visits, conducted surveys, and provided the parents with information about school programs and personnel, and services available from social agencies. Mass media also informed the parents about what the schools were doing for disadvantaged students and their families. An evaluation of this project showed that the aides established good rapport with teachers and the community but were not successful in changing the negative parent attitudes about student-teacher relations and the educational quality of the schools. The aides themselves showed no positive changes in attitudes about student-teacher relations or educational quality of the schools. (NH)

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AN EXPERIMENT IN SCHOOL - COMMUNITY RELATIONS

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PURPOSE

This study represents an attempt at creating a more satisfying relationship between the home and school, where-by one helps and reinforces the other in the learning process of disadvantaged students. It is specifically designed to bridge the communication and information gap between the home and school by using family community aides as liaison personnel. These aides are part of "Project Challenge", a program to raise the disadvantaged child's achievement level by providing: (1) instructional materials such as educational films, books, charts, ect., (2) supervised study centers, (3) individual tutoring, and (4) better school community relations.

RATIONALE

One important aspect of meeting the special educational needs of disadvantaged students is the development of an adequate and mutually satisfying relationship between the home and school. It is axiomatic that students of parents who hold positive attitudes about the school, self and their children would manifest these desireable traits in higher academic achievement, social adjustment and emotional stability. Likewise, it would seem reasonable to suspect that parents who do not support the school and its many goals would have children

who reflected these negative attitudes in their low achievement, motivational level and school interest, Deutsch (1963), Davis (1965) and Sexton (1961) have noted the need for parental involvement with the school and their children in order to change students' achievement and attitudes.

Attitudes are shaped by the information to which the individual is exposed, however, information alone is rarely the sole determiner. New information is often used to form attitudes which support pre-existing ones. Attitudes, therefore, may be valid in their cognitive componet, they correspond to the facts about the object of the attitudes or they may not. Superstitions and racial prejudices e.g., are attitudes which are characterized by their wide divergence from the facts.

Many school related attitudes held by disadvantaged parents may lack vadidity simply because they are not well informed. The information to which these parents are exposed is either distorted or quite inadequate to represent the facts. Cottrell and Eberhart (1948) have shown that education and income were highly related to the number of sources of information available to individuals.

Research on the attitudes of parents of disadvantaged students, in many instances, is at variance with popular beliefs. Riessman (1955) found lower class Negro and white parents listed education as the thing wanted most for their children. Sears and Maccoby (1957) found that deprived parents are more concerned that their children do well in elementary school than are middle class parents. This concern may reflect the suspicions and fears which these parents have of the school rather than a positive attitude toward education.

In opposition to the above Stendler (1951) found the existence of socio-economic differences with regard to beliefs and support of the school. Low income mothers held negative educational attitudes as reflected in (1) lower aspirational levels held for their children (2) less adequate readiness training and (3) lack of importance attached to report cards than middle class mothers. Brookover and Gottlieb (1963) have hypothesized that differences in beliefs and attitudes about school and related objects may be due primarily to differences in educational sophistication among parents and students from various social strata.

Typically disadvantaged parents tend to be suspicious and distrustful of the school, thus they do not have pleasant interpersonal relations with school personnel. A schism may develop

between the school and the home even among those parents who hold favorable attitudes toward education unless measures are taken to promote harmonious school-home relations. Clarizio (1966) in his unpublished doctoral disseration has stated the situation:

> It appears that culturally deprived parents are probably more interested in education than what is popularly believed. However, they may not be able to take advantage of the educational opportunities which present themselves to the extent that middle class parents do, because of their lack of knowledge about school and its purposes.

This is especially true for lower class Negro parents.

It was assumed that family community aides would provide a method of increasing disadvantaged parents' knowledge of the school and family involvement which is different from that typically accomplished by teachers and certified personnel. Since they are not viewed as teachers and are recruited from the ranks of the disadvantaged, parents are more likely to identify with them than professional staff members of the school: Parents should accept them and be willing to cooperate with them.

HYPOTHESES

Implicit in the following hypotheses are the hoped for answers to several questions which were proposed to determine the degree to which aides were successful in bridging ~~so~~ the communication gap between the disadvantaged home and school:

HYPOTHESIS I. School community aides when properly trained will establish good rapport with professional educators and persons from the disadvantaged community.

HYPOTHESIS II. Aides will increase disadvantaged parents' knowledge about the school's Title I Programs by providing additional information in the form of written communications and oral explanations.

HYPOTHESIS III. Persons from the disadvantaged community will exhibit more positive attitudes toward the school as a result of the personal contact made by aides.

HYPOTHESIS IV. Persons from the disadvantaged community will seek to maintain and continue contact with the school through school community aides.

HYPOTHESIS V. Aides will have an increased knowledge about the school's Title I Programs as a results of their experiences.

HYPOTHESIS VI. Aides will exhibit more positive attitudes toward the school as a result of their experiences.

METHODOLOGY

Family community aides worked in disadvantaged schools in East St. Louis, Illinois as auxillary school personnel for four monchs.[1] During this time they assisted teachers and performed duties in accord with Bullentin No. 14 from the Office of The Superintendent of Public Instructions, State of Illinois. [2] Some specific duties which aides performed in the school were; (1) taking attendance, (2) keeping up cumulative records (3) typing and duplicating materials, (4) operating movie projectors (5) keeping up bullentin boards (6) helping to supervise smaller children on the playground (7) escorting children home who had become ill at school or who had to go home for other reasons. These experience gave them an idea of some of the problems teachers and students face in the classroom, and a more accurate reflection of the school's philosophy, rules and expectations.

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[1]Aides received a sixteen week training program for performing school auxillary duties by the Delinquency Study and Youth Development Project, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville Campus.

[2]This bullentin re-emphasized the state's position prohibiting non-certified personnel from exercising any duties which could be classed as instructional.

During phase two of the program aides were taken out of the schools and given training in making home visits, conducting surveys and imparting helpful information. A questionnaire was developed for measuring the knowledge possessed by disadvantaged parents of. (1) Title I Projects, (2) Their objectives, (3) The kinds of pupils they served, (4) Their administrators, (5) Their locations and telephone numbers. A school attitude survey was prepared for assessing attitudes about the quality of education received in the disadvantaged school, and the interpersonal relationship between students and teachers. Kits containing the kinds of information called for in the questionnaires were prepared and distributed to aides. In addition, a list of social agencies and their purposes was prepared for referrals and included in the kits.

A random sample of fifty parents was then drawn from each of ten disadvantaged schools. Sixty-six were later discarded leaving 434 parents of children attending disadvantaged schools as the sample on which this report is primarily based. These 434 parents were equally divided among thirty-six aides.

Aides made two home visits with one group of parents or responsible adults. The first meeting, by far the most crucial, was conducted as a teaching learning experience. Parents were administered the questionnaires and given a short

verbal summary of the information contained in the kits. An attempt was made to answer any relevant questions about programs or referral agencies, and to assist parents in talking about them. Information kits were left with the instructions to re-read the materials with the family, and try to get a better understanding of them. The second meeting two weeks later, concerned itself with obtaining post-test data by re-administering assessment instruments.

Aides made only one visit with two groups of parents. These visits were at the beginning and end of the aides home visitations. The same procedures were followed for each of these visits as for meeting one of the group which was contacted twice.

This procedure produce three groups of parents: Group I was administered the pre-test, given information kits and explanations, but where not post-tested. Group II was given pre-test, information kits and explanations and post-tested two weeks later. Group III was post-tested two weeks after home visitations had begun and then given information kits and explanations.

The mass media were used to back up the job done by the aides. Specially prepared materials and announcements were carried over one of the local radio stations and ran in

one local paper. A thirty minute program was carried over radio which attempted to acquaint the community with what the school with the help of the federal government was doing to help disadvantaged students and their parents.

The Delinquency Study and Youth Development Project, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville (1967) evaluated the preceived worth of aides in the schools. Principals, teachers and aides were interviewed to determine their subjective views about the program. Results from this evaluation were used to test hypothesis I. Data were subjected to a Chi Square analysis with the level of significance set at .05.

Pre and post-test data obtained from interviewed disadvantaged parents were used to test the other hypotheses. Group data were compared by using Duncan's New Multiple Range Test with the level of significance set at .05.

By paralleling elements of this three group design the affects of the aides as communicators of information and instruments in producing positive attitude changes, the affects of the mass media and the affects of aides and mass media were determined. This design is schematically diagramed:

$$\begin{array}{lll} O_1 & X_{ab} & \\ O_2 & X_{ab} & O_3 \\ & X_b & O_4 \end{array}$$

Where O_1 and O_2 are pre-test scores and O_3 and O_4 are post-

test scores. X_{ab} represents the combined treatment affects of aides and mass media, and X_b represents treatment affects of mass media alone. It was hoped that: $O_1 = O_2$; $O_3 > O_2$; $O_3 > O_1$; $O_3 > O_4$; $O_4 > O_2$; $O_4 > O_1$. If these comparisons are in the desired direction the strength of the inferences is greatly increased.

RESULTS

Teachers' ratings of the overall job done by aides in the school revealed they were satisfied with their performance as auxillary school personnel. Data obtained from the Delinquency Study and Youth Development Project, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville Campus revealed twenty-eight aides were rated as performing very well in the school; thirteen were rated as good performers; five as average; one as a fair performer; and two as poor.

A Chi-Square value of 58.44 was obtained for these frequencies. This value is significant for 4 d.f. below the .01 level. Properly trained school community aides did establish good rapport with professional educators.

Only four incidents of parents who either refused to let an aide into the home or failed to cooperate with her were reported. This finding was quite encouraging when you consider that 314 families (68% of the sample) were contacted twice by

some thirty-six aides. However, some aides reported some of the parents were apprehensive at the beginning of the interview, but became quite relaxed and interested as the interview progressed. Aides reported parents were very interested in projects and were very pleased that this effort had been made to communicate with them.

A Chi-Square of 298 was obtained from the observed frequencies of aides who conducted successful interviews. This value is significant below the .01 level for 1 d.f. Properly trained school community aides did establish good rapport with persons from the disadvantaged community.

Pre-test scores of disadvantaged parents revealed they possessed very little knowledge of the school's Title I Programs. In fact most parents knew absolutely nothing about these projects, although many of their children were being served by them. The mean score for both groups was 3.78 out of a possible high of 30.00 the mode occured at 0.

Disadvantaged parents' attitudes about student-teacher relations and the quality of education received by their children were more favorable than their knowledge of programs. The mean score for both groups was 15.60 out of a possible 18.00 with the mode occuring at 18.00. This was an unexpected finding and points out the tremendous potential for establishing a mutually satisfying relations with these parents.

Although pre-test scores for aides were higher the pattern was similar to parents. The mean information score was 7.35 with a mode of 7.00. The mean attitude score was 15.80 with the mode at 18.00.

Comparisons of the means of pre and post-tests data for groups I, II and III substantiated hypothesis II, but led to the rejection of hypothesis III. Aides did increase disadvantaged parents' knowledge of the schools' Title I Programs by providing additional information in the form of written communications and oral explanations, but they were ineffective in changing parents' attitudes about the quality of education recieved by their children and pupil-teacher relations in disadvantaged schools. Table I contains results from applying Duncan's New Multiple Range Test.

The fact that aides were not successful in changing the attitudes of disadvantaged parents about teacher-pupil relations and the quality of education received by their children is not surprising: These parents' expressed attitudes were positive to begin with and the ceiling effects would most certainly mitigate against any radical changes. In addition, those negative attitudes which were expressed may be highly ego involved and practically insentive to changes by the methods used herein: No overt attempt was made by aides to change

TABLE I. SUMMARY of DUNCANS NEW MULTIPLE TESTS

DUNCAN'S TEST FOR KNOWLEDGE of TITLE I PROGRAMS

Mean	Group I Pre-test 3.75	Group II Pre-test 3.80	Group III Post-test 6.87	Group II Post-test 10.16	Shortest Significant Range
Group I		.05	3.12	6.41	2.20
Group II			3.07	6.36	2.12
Group III				3.29	2.05

*The F score for the overall effects was 1.70. For 3 and 236 degrees of freedom this value is not significant at the .05 level.

DUNCAN'S TEST for ATTITUDES of STUDENT - TEACHER RELATIONS and QUALITY of EDUCATION

Mean	Group I Pre-test 15.60	Group II Pre-test 15.60	Group III Post-test 15.60	Group II Post-test 16.51	Shortest Significant Range
Group I			.03	.91	.699
Group II			.03	.91	.675
Group III				.88	.637

**The F score for the overall effects on attitudes was 1.99. This value is not significant for 3 and 236 at the .05 level.

***Means not underscored by the same line are not significantly different.

these attitudes, other than establishing a mutually satisfying relations with parents and acquainting them with the school's programs. It was hoped that this kind of helping relationship would produce positive attitude changes about the school as a by product: A quixotic desire to say the least.

The use of the mass media proved to be successful in creating a greater awareness of Title I Programs and backing up the job done by aides, however they were not as effective as the personal contact made by aides. Scores of parents contacted after spot radio and newspaper announcements but who had no prior contact with aides were significantly higher than pre-test scores of groups I and II, while significantly lower than parents who had been visited by aides and received oral communication and explanations. No differential effects were found between the attitudes of groups I,II and III.

The effects which aides exhibited as a result of home visitations were similar to that exhibited by parents. Hypothesis V was accepted, but hypothesis VI had to be rejected. Aides had an increased knowledge about the school's Title I Programs after receiving training, making home visitations and being exposed to the mass media spot announcements, but they did not exhibit any positive attitude changes about student-teacher relations and the quality of education received in the disadvantaged schools.

The F score of 188.61 is significant for aides increased knowledge of Title I Programs for 1 and 74 degrees of freedom below the .01 level.

Variation	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Squares	F
Between	6820.11	1	6820.11	188.61*
Within	2675.82	74	36.16	
TOTAL	9495.93	75		

The F score for changes in aides attitudes about the quality of education received and student-teacher relations in the disadvantaged schools was 1.56.

Variation	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Squares	F
Between	52.22	1	52.22	1.56
Within	2483.98	74	35.57	
TOTAL	2536.20	75		

This value is not significant at the .05 level for 1 and 74 degrees of freedom..

CONCLUSION

Data tend to support the contention that lay persons drawn from the ranks of the disadvantaged when properly trained can act as effective liaison personnel between the home and school. They are able to form mutually satisfying relations

with professional educators and persons from the disadvantaged community, and parents seem to identify with them. They are viewed as knowledgable auxillary school personnel and are able to bridge the communication and information gap between the disadvantaged home and school.

Results of the effectiveness of aides as modifiers of disadvantaged parents attitudes about teacher-student relations and the quality of education received by students attending disadvantaged schools were not encouraging. Not only were aides ineffective in changing parents attitudes, but they did not change their own even after intimate contact with school personnel. However, these attitudes were somewhat positive to begin with as other researchers have shown, Riessman (1957) and Sears and Maccoby (1957). However, more work in this area needs to be done with stiffer controls and better assessment instruments.

In summary this attempt at creating a more satisfying relationship between the home and school has shown great promise and should be continued. A greater effort in bringing about positive attitude changes toward the school by the disadvantaged community should be taken. But most important is the change in the philosophy and thinking of the school that disadvantaged parents are not interested in or do not care about school programs for their children which this attempt represents.

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